

# Should a Husband be Flattered or Furious If Another Man Kisses His Wife?



Mrs. Minna Rosenthal, Who Got the Kiss That Brought Her Husband's Fist Into the Tenor's Face, and Raised the Question at the Top of This Page.



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"SMASH!"

"A sturdy fist shot out from somewhere and landed squarely on the rosy, Texas-complexioned forehead of the tenor."

"Ouch!" groaned the handsome tenor as he crumpled up in a perfectly natural but not at all artistic bundle on the floor of the great Hotel Commodore ballroom.

"I'll teach you to insult a lady—you kissed my wife! Get up and I will finish your lesson now and here," said the doctor as that awful fist slowly drew into position for another sledge-hammer blow."



Dr. Harvey Rosenthal, His Daughter Florence and Dog "Buddy."

IT was in the crowded ballroom of the Hotel Commodore in New York the other evening that something happened suddenly, unexpectedly, which raised a question which is not easy to answer.

And the question is:

Should a husband be flattered or furious when another man kisses his wife?

It was after the conclusion of the programme of the concert given as a charity benefit for crippled children that the patrons, guests and distinguished singers split into little groups for supper and then strolled into the splendid big ballroom for dancing.

In that ballroom were many well-known New York men and women of fashion, wealth and philanthropic impulses. Several distinguished stars of the Metropolitan Opera House galaxy had generously volunteered their services, and among them was Mr. Rafaele Diaz, the handsome young tenor of the Metropolitan.

Miss Mary McCormic, the charming singer of the Chicago Opera Company, happened to be in town and went along to the concert as a guest of Mr. and Mrs. Louis White Fehr, the lawyer and musical critic. Mr. Fehr's wife is also well-known in the world of music as Elizabeth Mandelkern Fehr.

Mr. and Mrs. Fehr know everybody of musical importance in New York and Chicago, and it was the most natural thing in the world as Mr. Fehr's party strolled across the ballroom for Mrs. Fehr to present her guest to Mr. Diaz, the popular tenor of the Metropolitan's forces.

The two musical artists, Diaz of the Metropolitan, and Miss McCormic, of the Chicago company, are both young and attractive and it was a real pleasure to each of these artists to meet.

The young tenor is not ashamed of being called good looking and makes no objection if somebody mentions his fresh, glowing complexion. Mr. Diaz has Spanish blood in his veins and his ancestors moved up from Mexico into Texas, where young Diaz lived his boyhood in the open life of the out-of-doors, which he still loves to think of. Texas, with its endless miles of unbroken grazing acres, was a joy to him as a boy, and is still a bond of common interest with anybody else he meets from Texas.

"It is a great pleasure to meet you, Miss McCormic," said Mr. Diaz. "With such a charming natural face, figure and complexion, surely you need none of the artifices of make-up when you sing your lines."

It was a very pretty speech on the part of Mr. Diaz, and Miss McCormic smiled sweetly at the compliment and tried to think rapidly for something equally pleasant to say.

"All those nice things you have just said apply to you quite as well," Miss McCormic ventured, and then, to be more specific, added, "what a wonderfully fine complexion you have, Mr. Diaz."

"I am from Texas, where the sun always shines," the tenor replied, with beaming face.

"Why, I am from Texas, too," exclaimed Miss McCormic.

And then the young Metropolitan tenor clasped both hands of the Chicago singer and planted a kiss upon her enraptured face—an "artistic kiss," they called it.

Mrs. Fehr, the hostess, is a woman of quick mental action. Instantly she realized that the secret key to the treasure chest of kisses of the opera star lay in the magic word, "Texas." Mr. Fehr grasped the situation, too, and touched his wife's arm. Scarcely had the tenor withdrawn from the gentle embrace and Miss McCormic recovered from the delicious thrill of the unexpected attention when Mrs. Fehr pressed close to Mr. Diaz and said: "Oh, Mr. Diaz, I am from Texas, too!"

Of course, the tenor did the gallant thing. Fixing his eyes upon the expectant face of Mrs. Fehr he advanced a step and planted an artistic kiss where it was hoped for.

Mrs. Fehr is a big-hearted, generous woman. Her guest, Mary McCormic, had been favored; she herself had received a priceless token—were there not other friends of Mrs. Fehr within reach who might be gotten in on the kissing while the kissing was good?

At that instant Mrs. Fehr's eye beheld her friend, Mrs. Minna Rosenthal, a few paces away on the ballroom floor.

"Minna, Minna, come over here a minute. I want you to meet Mr. Diaz," she cried.

And as Mrs. Fehr brought up her friend to the presence of the great tenor and they clasped hands she spoke the magic words:

"And Mrs. Rosenthal is from Texas, too, you should know."

Again the handsome tenor arose to the bait and planted an artistic kiss where he thought it belonged. A look of surprise spread over the face of Mrs. Rosenthal when—

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A sturdy fist shot out from somewhere and landed squarely on the rosy Texas-complexioned forehead of the tenor.

Now, Mr. Diaz has played many parts

on the grand opera stage. He has been in love scenes, in murder scenes, in duels and in fist fights. It is necessary in playing these various grand opera roles to seem to take thumps, punches and sword thrusts and to fall as if injured or killed. But on all these occasions on the stage Mr. Diaz knows exactly what is coming and prepares to take what the part calls for and arranges his stage fall in a becoming manner.

This time, however, the flying fist was not down on the programme. Mr. Diaz didn't know that a very solid blow was coming through the air to land on his Texas complexion. He did not even know who the man was who owned the fist. He had no time to practise a graceful, artistic fall.

Bang! went the fist, as already mentioned.

"Ouch!" groaned the handsome tenor as he crumpled up in a perfectly natural but not at all artistic bundle on the floor of the great Hotel Commodore ballroom.

As the astonished singer groped to his knees and turned upward a bewildered face he beheld the menacing fist of Dr. Harvey Rosenthal, of Riverside Drive, and heard these words of explanation:

"I'll teach you to insult a lady—you kissed my wife! Get up and I will finish your lesson now and here!" said the doctor as that awful fist slowly drew into position for another sledgehammer blow.

Well, of course, it was a tragic situation. Mrs. Rosenthal stood petrified with surprise. Mary McCormic's pretty jaw dropped and Mrs. Fehr, who had been the innocent cause of the tragedy, covered her eyes with her fan to keep out of her vision what she was sure would be murder.

Mr. Fehr, who had stood close to Diaz during the three artistic kisses, realized that Dr. Rosenthal was thoroughly in earnest. Instantly springing between the bewildered tenor and the infuriated husband of the last-kissed woman, Mr. Fehr ar-



Mr. Louis W. Fehr.

rived at the right spot at the right moment to receive on his own head punch number two, which was intended for Mr. Diaz's sunny Texas complexion.

Friends gathered up the disheveled tenor and moved him to a place of safety in another part of the hotel, while Mr. Fehr and other friends held the able fists of the doctor until he had calmed down.

And then, as the news of the little tragedy spread through the great ballroom, the momentous question passed from lip to lip:

"Should a husband be flattered or furious if another man kisses his wife?"

The reader of this page will already have decided his or her answer to this question, no doubt, but it is interesting perhaps to hear the point of view of the various actors in that little drama on the ballroom floor the other evening at the Commodore.

"To me, the affair at the Hotel Commodore is not a pleasant subject to discuss," said Dr. Rosenthal. "But I will say this—I was humiliated beyond measure to see Mr. Diaz take such a liberty with my wife. I regard it as the height of impudence for any man, whether he is an opera singer or not, to believe that my wife could be pleased and idly given kisses. That this man kissed Mrs. Rosenthal openly, publicly on a ballroom floor, simply added to the insult to both of us."



Rafaele Diaz, the Sunny-Complexioned Metropolitan Grand Opera Singer, in the Costume of the Part He Sings in "Thais."

any discrimination knows the difference between a compliment and a liberty. A compliment, like a courtesy, is appreciated by myself as well as Mrs. Rosenthal. But anybody with the instincts of a gentleman and the advantages that come from good breeding, knows where the dividing line lies between courtesy and familiarity.

"I am old-fashioned in my ideas, perhaps. I know that some husbands and some wives in this modern day seem to live under a free-and-easy code which is to me undignified, abhorrent and dangerous to sturdy morality. I have no fault to find with men who feel flattered when strangers fondle and kiss their wives, either in private or in public. That is their affair. But any man who attempts familiarity with my wife will be taught a lesson in good manners promptly."

It might be mentioned at this point that the doctor's wife is studying music and has vocal ambitions. In fact, Mrs. Rosenthal had an appointment to have a test made of her voice at the Metropolitan Opera House the very next day. Mrs. Fehr was to have gone with her as her accompanist.

But that appointment for the test of Mrs. Rosenthal's voice was broken. Dr. Rosenthal, in the light of what he had learned about the "artistic kiss" of the grand opera stars, refused to allow his wife to keep the appointment.

When Mr. Fehr was seen in regard to the ballroom episode, and asked whether a husband should be flattered or furious if another man kissed his wife, he said:

"It all depends on the kind, quality, place and circumstances of the kiss. I am a judge of kisses. I know the kinds and qualities and significance of various varieties of kisses. Being well acquainted

"I do not need any indorsement of my admiration of Mrs. Rosenthal from any other man. That Mrs. Rosenthal is my wife is evidence that I considered her a woman with all the charms and qualities which made her the one woman who fulfilled my idea of a wife. That is why she is my wife. My opinion is enough for me, whether another man likes her looks or not."

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"It all depends on the kind, quality, place and circumstances of the kiss. I am a judge of kisses. I know the kinds and qualities and significance of various varieties of kisses. Being well acquainted

with many opera stars I know what might be called "kisses of temperament," and these, believe me, are very different from the kisses which spell danger and the divorce court.

"Dr. Rosenthal is not an expert on kisses. He attaches too much importance to the kiss Mr. Diaz gave his wife. Dr. Rosenthal was stirred to jealousy which would be more fitting for a Turkish Sultan than the husband of a vocal artist, which Mrs. Rosenthal really is."

"If I caught a man kissing Mrs. Fehr in a cozy-corner, tete-a-tete, that would be a reprehensible kiss. But I have enough confidence in my wife to know that she would never permit a secret caress. The kiss in the ballroom of the hotel was a perfectly frank, open thing. It had no significance any more than a handshake."

"A kiss is sometimes a safety valve," continued Mr. Fehr, philosophically. "A temperamental tenor admires a pretty woman. She is flattered by his admiration. A kiss is like the flashing of the lightning from one charged cloud to another. Let it flash and the emotion evaporates. Suppress it and you can't tell where it will lead. If it is open, public, prudes may gasp. Othello may go mad, but men of the world will smile and charge it up to the artistic temperament."

"Mrs. Fehr was a well-known concert pianist when I met her. She was accustomed to applause and admiration. To be admired makes her happy. It is not the first time she has been kissed by another man in my presence. When Caruso set sail for Italy from which he was not to return, we went to the ship to see him off. When in a spirit of bravado Caruso sang one long, high note, Mrs. Fehr bubbled over and kissed him; he kissed her back. I did not object to that."

So, while Dr. Rosenthal made no secret of his furious indignation at what he regarded as an insult and a humiliating familiarity, Mr. Fehr found reason to be pleased and rather flattered. Mr. Fehr's happy smile which likened a kiss to the flash of lightning harmlessly playing between one charged cloud and another, did not explain what would happen if one of the clouds concerned in the lightning flash happened to be charged with powder.

"If Mr. Fehr was jealous I should be very unhappy," Mrs. Fehr observed. "He is glad to have men admire me, because that corroborates his own admiration."

And Mr. Rafaele Diaz, the handsome tenor of the Metropolitan forces, whose sunny Texas complexion was damaged that night in the ballroom, had only this comment to make:

"Hereafter I shall have to get a certificate of a husband's approval when any lady tells me she is from Texas."

And the editor, as he finishes reading this article, wonders how the readers of this page would answer the question: "Should a husband be flattered or furious if another man kisses his wife?"